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Thoughts for a convention

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# **THOUGHTS FOR A CONVENTION**

**Memorandum on the  
State of Ireland By A.E.**

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## THOUGHTS FOR A CONVENTION

1. There are moments in history when by the urgency of circumstance everyone in a country is drawn from normal pursuits to consider the affairs of the nation. The merchant is turned from his warehouse, the bookman from his books, the farmer from his fields, because they realize that the very foundations of the Society, under whose shelter they were able to carry on their avocation, are being shaken, and they can no longer be voiceless, or leave it to deputies, unadvised by them, to arrange national destinies. We are all accustomed to endure the annoyances and irritations caused by legislation which is not agreeable to us, and solace ourselves by remembering that the things which really matter are not affected. But when the destiny of a nation, the principles by which life is to be guided are at stake, all are on a level, are equally affected and are bound to give expression to their opinions. Ireland is in one of these moments of history. Circumstances with which we are all familiar and the fever in which the world exists have infected it, and it is like molten metal the skilled political artificer might pour into a desirable mould. But if it is not handled rightly, if any factor is ignored, there may be an explosion which would bring on us a fate as tragic as anything in our past history. Irishmen can no longer afford to remain aloof from each other, or to address each other distantly and defiantly from press or platform, but must strive to understand each other truly, and to give due weight to each others' opinions, and, if possible arrive at a compromise, a balancing of their diversities, which may save our country from anarchy and chaos for generations to come.

2. An agreement about Irish Government must be an agreement, not between two but three Irish parties first of all, and afterwards with Great Britain. The Premier of a coalition Cabinet has declared that there is no measure of self government which Great Britain would not assent to being set up in Ireland, if Irishmen themselves could but come to an agreement. Before such a compromise between Irish parties is possible there must be a clear understanding of the ideals of these parties, as they are understood by themselves, and not as they are presented in party controversy by special pleaders whose object too often is to pervert or discredit the principles and actions of opponents, a thing which is easy to do because all parties, even the noblest, have followers who do them disservice by ignorant advocacy or excited action. If we are to unite Ireland we can only do so by recognising what truly are the principles each party stands for, and will not forsake, and for which if necessary they will risk life. True understanding is to see ideals as they are held by men between themselves and Heaven ; and in this mood I will try, first of all, to understand the position of Unionists, Sinn Feiners and Constitutional Nationalists as they have been explained to me by the best minds among them, those who have induced others of their countrymen to accept those ideals. When this is done we will see if compromise, a balancing of diversities be not possible in an Irish State where all that is essential in these varied ideals may be harmonized and retained.

3. I will take first of all the position of Unionists. They are, many of them, the descendants of settlers who, by their entrance into Ireland broke up the Gaelic uniformity and introduced the speech, the thoughts, characteristic of another race. While they have grown to love their country as much as any of Gaelic origin, and their peculiarities have been modified by centuries of life in Ireland and by intermarriage, so that they are much more akin to their

fellow-countrymen in mind and manner than they are to any other people, they still retain habits, beliefs and traditions from which they will not part. They form a class economically powerful. They have openness and energy of character, great organizing power and a mastery over materials, all qualities invaluable in an Irish State. In North-East Ulster where they are most homogeneous they conduct the affairs of their cities with great efficiency, carrying on an international trade not only with Great Britain but with the rest of the world. They have made these industries famous. They believe that their prosperity is in large measure due to their acceptance of the Union, that it would be lessened if they threw in their lot with the other Ireland and accepted its ideals, that business which now goes to their shipyards and factories would cease if they were absorbed in a self-governing Ireland whose spokesmen had an unfortunate habit of nagging their neighbours and of conveying the impression that they are inspired by race hatred. They believe that an Irish legislature would be controlled by a majority, representatives mainly of small farmers, men who had no knowledge of affairs, or of the peculiar needs of Ulster industry, or the intricacy of the problems involved in carrying on an international trade; that the religious ideas of the majority would be so favoured in education and government that the favouritism would amount to religious oppression. They are also convinced that no small country in the present state of the world can really be independent, that such only exist by sufferance of their mighty neighbours, and must be subservient in trade policy and military policy to retain even a nominal freedom; and that an independent Ireland would by its position be a focus for the intrigues of powers hostile to Great Britain, and if it achieved independence Great Britain in self protection would be forced to conquer it again. They consider that security for industry and

freedom for the individual can best be preserved in Ireland by the maintenance of the Union, and that the world spirit is with the great empires.

4. The second political group may be described as the spiritual inheritors of the more ancient race in Ireland. They regard the preservation of their nationality as a sacred charge, themselves as a conquered people owing no allegiance to the dominant race. They cannot be called traitors to it because neither they nor their predecessors have ever admitted the right of another people to govern them against their will. They are inspired by an ancient history, a literature stretching beyond the Christian era, a national culture and distinct national ideals which they desire to manifest in a civilization which shall not be an echo or imitation of any other. While they do not depreciate the worth of English culture or its political system they are as angry at its being imposed on them as a young man with a passion for art would be if his guardian insisted on his adopting another profession and denied him any chance of manifesting his own genius. Few hatreds equal those caused by the denial or obstruction of national aptitudes. Many of those who fought in the last Irish insurrection were fighters not merely for a political change but were rather desperate and despairing champions of a culture which they held was being stifled from infancy in Irish children in the schools of the nation. They believe that the national genius cannot manifest itself in a civilization and is not allowed to manifest itself while the Union persists. They wish Ireland to be as much itself as Japan, and as free to make its own choice of political principles, its culture and social order, and to develop its industries unfettered by the trade policy of their neighbours. Their mood is unconquerable, and while often overcome it has emerged again and again in Irish history, and it has perhaps more adherents to-day than at any period since the Act of Union, and this has been helped on by the



incarnation of the Gaelic spirit in modern Anglo-Irish literature, and a host of brilliant poets, dramatists and prose writers who have won international recognition, and have increased the dignity of spirit and the self-respect of the followers of this tradition. They assert that the Union kills the soul of the people; that empires do not permit the intensive cultivation of human life: that they destroy the richness and variety of existence by the extinction of peculiar and unique gifts, and the substitution therefor of a culture which has its value mainly for the people who created it, but is as alien to our race as the mood of the scientist is to the artist or poet.

5. The third group occupies a middle position between those who desire the perfecting of the Union and those whose claim is for complete independence: and because they occupy a middle position, and have taken coloring from the extremes between which they exist they have been exposed to the charge of insincerity, which is unjust so far as the best minds among them are concerned. They have aimed at a middle course, not going far enough on one side or another to secure the confidence of the extremists. They have sought to maintain the connexion with the empire, and at the same time to acquire an Irish control over administration and legislation. They have been more practical than ideal, and to their credit must be placed the organizing of the movements which secured most of the reforms in Ireland since the Union, such as religious equality, the acts securing to farmers fair rents and fixity of tenure, the wise and salutary measures making possible the transfer of land from landlord to tenant, facilities for education at popular universities, the labourers' acts and many others. They are a practical party taking what they could get, and because they could show ostensible results they have had a greater following in Ireland than any other party. This is natural because the average man in all countries is a realist. But this reliance on

material results to secure support meant that they must always show results, or the minds of their countrymen veered to those ultimates and fundamentals which await settlement here as they do in all civilizations. As in the race with Atalanta the golden apples had to be thrown in order to win the race. The intellect of Ireland is now fixed on fundamentals, and the compromise this middle party is able to offer does not make provision for the ideals of either of the extremists, and indeed meets little favour anywhere in a country excited by recent events in world history, where revolutionary changes are expected and a settlement far more in accord with fundamental principles.

6. It is possible that many of the rank and file of these parties will not at first agree with the portraits painted of their opponents, and that is because the special pleaders of the press, who in Ireland are, as a rule, allowed little freedom to state private convictions, have come to regard themselves as barristers paid to conduct a case, and have acquired the habit of isolating particular events, the hasty speech or violent action of individuals in localities, and of exhibiting these as indicating the whole character of the party attacked. They misrepresent Irishmen to each other. The Ulster advocates of the Union, for example, are accustomed to hear from their advisers that the favourite employment of Irish farmers in the three southern provinces is cattle driving, if not worse. They are told that Protestants in these provinces live in fear of their lives, whereas anybody who has knowledge of the true conditions know that, so far from being riotous and unbusinesslike, the farmers in these provinces have developed a network of rural associations, dairies, bacon factories, agricultural and poultry societies, etc., doing their business efficiently, applying the teachings of science in their factories, competing in quality of output with the very best of the same class of society in Ulster and obtaining as good prices in the same market. As a matter of fact this method of organiza-

tion now largely adopted by Ulster farmers was initiated in the South. With regard to the charge of intolerance I do not believe it. Here, as in all other countries, there are unfortunate souls obsessed by dark powers, whose human malignity takes the form of religious hatreds, but I believe, and the thousands of Irish Protestants in the Southern Counties will affirm it as true, that they have nothing to complain of in this respect. I am sure that in this matter of religious tolerance these provinces can stand favourable comparison with any country in the world where there are varieties of religions, even with Great Britain. I would plead with my Ulster compatriots not to gaze too long or too credulously into that distorting mirror held up to them, nor be tempted to take individual action as representative of the mass. How would they like to have the depth or quality of spiritual life in their great city represented by the scrawlings and revilings about the head of the Catholic Church to be found occasionally on the blank walls of Belfast. If the same method of distortion by selection of facts was carried out there is not a single city or nation which could not be made to appear baser than Sodom or Gomorrah and as deserving of their fate.

7. The Ulster character is better appreciated by Southern Ireland, and there is little reason to vindicate it against any charges except the slander that Ulster Unionists do not regard themselves as Irishmen, and that they have no love for their own country. Their position is that they are Unionists, not merely because it is for the good of Great Britain, but because they hold it to be for the good of Ireland, and it is the Irish argument weighs with them, and if they were convinced it would be better for Ireland to be self-governed they would throw in their lot with the rest of Ireland, which would accept them gladly and greet them as a prodigal son who had returned, having made, unlike most prodigal sons, a fortune, and well able to be the wisest adviser in family affairs. It is necessary to preface what I

have to say by way of argument or remonstrance to Irish parties by words making it clear that I write without prejudice against any party, and that I do not in the least underestimate their good qualities or the weight to be attached to their opinions and ideals. It is the traditional Irish way, which we have too often forgotten, to notice the good in the opponent before battling with what is evil. So Maeve, the ancient Queen of Connacht, looking over the walls of her city of Cruachan at the Ulster foemen, said of them, "Noble and regal is their appearance," and her own followers said, "Noble and regal are those of whom you speak." When we lost the old Irish culture we lost the tradition of courtesy to each other which lessens the difficulties of life and makes it possible to conduct controversy without creating bitter memories.

8. I desire first to argue with Irish Unionists whether it is accurate to say of them, as it would appear to be from their spokesmen, that the principle of nationality cannot be recognized by them or allowed to take root in the commonwealth of dominions which form the Empire. Must one culture only exist? Must all citizens have their minds poured into the same mould, and varieties of gifts and cultural traditions be extinguished? What would India with its myriad races say to that theory? What would Canada enclosing in its dominion and cherishing a French Canadian nation say? Unionists have by every means in their power discouraged the study of the national literature of Ireland though it is one of the most ancient in Europe, though the scholars of France and Germany have founded journals for its study, and its beauty is being recognized by all who have read it. It contains the race memory of Ireland, its imaginations and thoughts for two thousand years. Must that be obliterated? Must national character be sterilised of all taint of its peculiar beauty? Must Ireland have no character of its own but be servilely imitative of its neighbour in all things and be nothing of

itself? It is objected that the study of Irish history, Irish literature and the national culture generates hostility to the Empire. Is that a true psychological analysis? Is it not true in all human happenings that if people are denied what is right and natural they will instantly assume an attitude of hostility to the power which denies? The hostility is not inherent in the subject but is evoked by the denial. I put it to my Unionist compatriots that the ideal is to aim at a diversity of culture, and the greatest freedom, richness and variety of thought. The more this richness and variety prevail in a nation the less likelihood is there of the tyranny of one culture over the rest. We should aim in Ireland at that freedom of the ancient Athenians, who, as Pericles said, listened gladly to the opinions of others and did not turn sour faces on those who disagreed with them. A culture which is allowed essential freedom to develop will soon perish if it does not in itself contain the elements of human worth which make for immortality. The world has to its sorrow many instances of freak religions which were persecuted and so by natural opposition were perpetuated and hardened in belief. We should allow the greatest freedom in respect of cultural developments in Ireland so that the best may triumph by reason of superior beauty and not because the police are relied upon to maintain one culture in a dominant position.

9. I have also an argument to address to the extremists whose claim, uttered lately with more openness and vehemence, is for the complete independence of the whole of Ireland, who cry out against partition, who will not have a square mile of Irish soil subject to foreign rule. That implies they desire the inclusion of Ulster and the inhabitants of Ulster in their Irish State. I tell them frankly that if they expect Ulster to throw its lot in with a self-governing Ireland they must remain within the commonwealth of dominions which constitute the Empire, be prepared loyally, once Ireland has complete control over its

internal affairs, to accept the status of a dominion and the responsibilities of that wider union. If they will not accept that status as the Boers did, they will never draw that important and powerful Irish party into an Irish State except by force, and do they think there is any possibility of that? It is extremely doubtful whether if the world stood aloof, and allowed Irishmen to fight out their own quarrels among themselves, that the fighters for complete independence could conquer a community so numerous, so determined, so wealthy, so much more capable of providing for themselves the plentiful munitions by which alone one army can hope to conquer another. In South Africa men who had fiercer traditional hostilities than Irishmen of different parties here have had, who belonged to different races, who had a few years before been engaged in a racial war, were great enough to rise above these past antagonisms, to make an agreement and abide faithfully by it. Is the same magnanimity not possible in Ireland? I say to my countrymen who cry out for the complete separation of Ireland from the Empire that they will not in this generation bring with them the most powerful and wealthy, if not the most numerous, party in their country. Complete control of Irish affairs is a possibility, and I suggest to the extremists that the status of a self-governing dominion inside a federation of dominions is a proposal which, if other safeguards for minority interests are incorporated, would attract Unionist attention. But if these men who depend so much in their economic enterprises upon a friendly relation with their largest customers are to be allured into a self-governing Ireland there must be acceptance of the Empire as an essential condition. The Boers found it not impossible to accept this status for the sake of a United South Africa. Are our Irish Boers not prepared to make a compromise and abide by it loyally for the sake of a united Ireland?

10. A remonstrance must also be addressed to the middle

party in that it has made no real effort to understand and conciliate the feelings of Irish Unionists. They have indeed made promises, no doubt sincerely, but they have undone the effect of all they said by encouraging of recent years the growth of sectarian organizations with political aims and have relied on these as on a party machine. It may be said that in Ulster a similar organization, sectarian with political objects, has long existed, and that this justified a counter organization. Both in my opinion are unjustifiable and evil, but the backing of such an organization was specially foolish in the case of the majority, whose main object ought to be to allure the minority into the same political fold. The baser elements in society, the intriguers, the job seekers, and all who would acquire by influence what they cannot attain by merit, flock into such bodies, and create a sinister impression as to their objects and deliberations. If we are to have national concord among Irishmen religion must be left to the Churches whose duty it is to promote it, and be dis severed from party politics, and it should be regarded as contrary to national idealism to organize men of one religion into secret societies with political or economic aims. So shall be left to Caesar the realm which is Caesar's, and it shall not appear part of the politics of eternity that Michael's sister's son obtains a particular post beginning at thirty shillings a week. I am not certain that it should not be an essential condition of any Irish settlement that all such sectarian organizations should be disbanded in so far as their objects are political, and remain solely as friendly societies. It is useless assuring a minority already suspicious, of the tolerance it may expect from the majority, if the party machine of the majority is sectarian and semi-secret, if no one of the religion of the minority can join it. I believe in spite of the recent growth of sectarian societies that it has affected but little the general tolerant spirit in Ireland, and where evils have appeared they have speedily resulted in the break up of the organi-

zation in the locality. Irishmen individually as a rule are much nobler in spirit than the political organizations they belong to.

11. It is necessary to speak with the utmost frankness and not to slur over any real difficulty in the way of a settlement. Irish parties must rise above themselves if they are to bring about an Irish unity. They appear on the surface unreconcilable, but that, in my opinion, is because the spokesmen of parties are under the illusion that they should never indicate in public that they might possibly abate one jot of the claims of their party. A crowd or organization is often more extreme than its individual members. I have spoken to Unionists and Sinn Feiners and find them as reasonable in private as they are unreasonable in public. I am convinced that an immense relief would be felt by all Irishmen if a real settlement of the Irish question could be arrived at, a compromise which would reconcile them to living under one government, and would at the same time enable us to live at peace with our neighbours. The suggestions which follow were the result of discussions between a group of Unionists, Nationalists and Sinn Feiners, and as they found it possible to agree upon a compromise it is hoped that the policy which harmonized their diversities may help to bring about a similar result in Ireland.

12. I may now turn to consider the Anglo-Irish problem and to make specific suggestions for its solution and the character of the government to be established in Ireland. The factors are triple. There is first the desire many centuries old of Irish nationalists for self-government and the political unity of the people : secondly, there is the problem of the Unionists who require that the self-governing Ireland they enter shall be friendly to the imperial connection, and that their religious and economic interests shall be safeguarded by real and not merely by verbal guarantees : and, thirdly, there is the position of Great Britain which requires, reason-



ably enough, that any self-governing dominion set up alongside it shall be friendly to the empire. In this matter Great Britain has priority of claim to consideration, for it has first proposed a solution, the Home Rule Act which is on the Statute Book, though later variants of that have been outlined because of the attitude of Unionists in North-East Ulster, variants which suggest the partition of Ireland, the elimination of six counties from the area controlled by the Irish government. This Act, or the variants of it offered to Ireland, is the British contribution to the settlement of the Anglo-Irish problem.

13. If it is believed that this scheme, or any diminutive of it, will settle the Anglo-Irish problem, British statesmen and people who trust them are only preparing for themselves bitter disappointment. I believe that nothing less than complete self-government has ever been the object of Irish Nationalism. However ready certain sections have been to accept instalments, no Irish political leader ever had authority to pledge his countrymen to accept a half measure as a final settlement of the Irish claim. The Home Rule Act, if put into operation to-morrow, even if Ulster were cajoled or coerced into accepting it, would not be regarded by Irish Nationalists as a final settlement, no matter what may be said at Westminster. Nowhere in Ireland has it been accepted as final. Received without enthusiasm at first, every year which has passed since the Bill was introduced has seen the system of self-government formulated there subjected to more acute and hostile criticism : and I believe it would be perfectly accurate to say that its passing to-morrow would only be the preliminary for another agitation, made fiercer by the unrest of the world, where revolutions and the upsetting of dynasties are in the air, and where the claims of nationalities no more ancient than the Irish, like the Poles, the Finns, and the Arabs, to political freedom are admitted by the spokesmen of the great

powers, Great Britain included, or are already conceded. If any partition of Ireland is contemplated this will intensify the bitterness now existing. I believe it is to the interest of Great Britain to settle the Anglo-Irish dispute. It has been countered in many of its policies in America and the Colonies by the vengeful feelings of Irish exiles. There may yet come a time when the refusal of the Irish mouse to gnaw at a net spread about the lion may bring about the downfall of the empire. It cannot be to the interest of Great Britain to have on its flank some millions of people who, whenever Great Britain is engaged in a war which threatens its existence, feel a thrill running through them, as prisoners do hearing the guns sounding closer of an army which comes, as they think, to liberate them. Nations denied essential freedom ever feel like that when the power which dominates them is itself in peril. Who can doubt but for the creation of Dominion Government in South Africa that the present war would have found the Boers thirsty for revenge, and the Home Government incapable of dealing with a distant people who taxed its resources but a few years previous. I have no doubt that if Ireland was granted the essential freedom and wholeness in its political life it desires, its mood also would be turned. I have no feelings of race hatred, no exultation in thought of the downfall of any race ; but as a close observer of the mood of millions in Ireland, I feel certain that if their claim is not met they will brood and scheme and wait to strike a blow ; though the dream may be handed on from them to their children and their children's children, yet they will hope, sometime, to give the last vengeful thrust of enmity at the stricken heart of the empire.

14. Any measure which is not a settlement, which leaves Ireland still actively discontented is a waste of effort, and the sooner English statesmen realize the futility of half measures the better. A man who claims a debt he

believes is due to him, who is offered half of it in payment, is not going to be conciliated or be one iota more friendly, if he knows that the other is able to pay the full amount and it could be yielded without detriment to the donor. Ireland will never be content with a system of self-government which lessens its representation in the Imperial Parliament, and still retains for that Parliament control over all-important matters like taxation and trade policy. Whoever controls these controls the character of an Irish civilization, and the demand of Ireland is not merely for administrative powers, but the power to fashion its own national policy, and to build up a civilization of its own with an economic character in keeping by self-devised and self-checked efforts. To misunderstand this is to suppose there is no such thing as national idealism, and that a people will accept substitutes for the principle of nationality, whereas the past history of the world and present circumstance in Europe is evidence that nothing is more unconquerable and immortal than national feeling, and that it emerges from centuries of alien government, and is ready at any time to flare out in insurrection. At no period in Irish history was that sentiment more self-conscious than it is to-day.

15. Nationalist Ireland requires that the Home Rule Act should be radically changed to give Ireland unfettered control over taxation, customs, excise and trade policy. These powers are at present denied, and if the Act were in operation, Irish people instead of trying to make the best of it, would begin at once to use whatever powers they had as a lever to gain the desired control, and this would lead to fresh antagonism and a prolonged struggle between the two countries, and in this last effort Irish Nationalists would have the support of that wealthy class now Unionist in the three southern provinces, and also in Ulster if it were included, for they would then desire as much as Nationalists that, while they live in a self-

governing Ireland, the powers of the Irish Government should be such as would enable it to build up Irish industries by an Irish trade policy, and to impose taxation in a way to suit Irish conditions. As the object of British consent to Irish self-government is to dispose of Irish antagonism nothing is to be gained by passing measures which will not dispose of it. The practically unanimous claim of Nationalists as exhibited in the press in Ireland is for the status and powers of economic control possessed by the self-governing dominions. By this alone will the causes of friction between the two nations be removed, and a real solidarity of interest based on a federal union for joint defence of the freedom and well-being of the federated communities be possible and I have no doubt it would take place. I do not believe that hatreds remain for long among people when the causes which created them are removed. We have seen in Europe and in the dominions the continual reversals of feeling which have taken place when a sore has been removed. Antagonisms are replaced by alliances. It is mercifully true of human nature that it prefers to exercise goodwill to hatred when it can, and the common sense of the best in Ireland would operate once there was no longer interference in our internal affairs, to allay and keep in order these turbulent elements which exist in every country, but which only become a danger to society when real grievances based on the violation of true principles of government are present.

16. The Union has failed absolutely to conciliate Ireland. Every generation there have been rebellions and shootings and agitations of a vehement and exhausting character carried continually to the point of lawlessness before Irish grievances could be redressed. A form of government which requires a succession of rebellions to secure reforms afterwards admitted to be reasonable cannot be a good form of government. These agitations have inflicted grave material and moral injury on Ireland. The

instability of the political system has prejudiced natural economic development. Capital will not be invested in industries where no one is certain about the future. And because the will of the people was so passionately set on political freedom an atmosphere of suspicion gathered around public movements which in other countries would have been allowed to carry on their beneficent work unhindered by any party. Here they were continually being forced to declare themselves either for or against self-government. The long attack on the movement for the organization of Irish agriculture was an instance. Men are elected on public bodies not because they are efficient administrators, but because they can be trusted to pass resolutions favouring one party or another. This has led to corruption. Every conceivable rascality in Ireland has hid itself behind the great names of nation or empire. The least and the most harmless actions of men engaged in philanthropic or educational work or social reform are scrutinized and criticized so as to obstruct good work. If a phrase even suggests the possibility of a political partiality, or tendency to anything which might be construed by the most suspicious scrutineer to indicate a remote desire to use the work done as an argument either for or against self-government, the man or movement is never allowed to forget it. Public service becomes intolerable and often impossible under such conditions, and while the struggle continues this also will continue to the moral detriment of the people. There are only two forms of government possible. A people may either be governed by force or may govern themselves. The dual government of Ireland by two houses of Parliament, one in Dublin and one in London, contemplated in the Home Rule Act would be impossible and irritating. Whatever may be said for two bodies each with their spheres of influence clearly defined, there is nothing to be said for two legislatures with concurrent powers of

legislation and taxation, and with members from Ireland retained at Westminster to provide some kind of democratic excuse for the exercise of powers of Irish legislation and taxation by the Parliament at Westminster. The Irish demand is that Great Britain shall throw upon our shoulders the full weight of responsibility for the management of our own affairs, so that we can only blame ourselves and our political guides and not Great Britain if we err in our policies.

17. I have stated what I believe to be sound reasons for the recognition of the justice of the Irish demand by Great Britain and I now turn to Ulster, and ask it whether the unstable condition of things in Ireland does not affect it even more than Great Britain. If it persists in its present attitude, if it remains out of a self-governing Ireland, it will not thereby exempt itself from political, social and economic trouble. Ireland will regard the six Ulster counties as the French have regarded Alsace-Lorraine, whose hopes of reconquest turned Europe into an armed camp, with the endless suspicions, secret treaties, military and naval developments, the expense of maintaining huge armies, and finally the inevitable war. So sure as Ulster remains out, so surely will it become a focus for nationalist designs. I say nothing of the injury to the great wholesale business carried on from its capital city throughout the rest of Ireland where the inevitable and logical answer of merchants in the rest of Ireland to requests for orders will be: "You would die rather than live in the same political house with us. We will die rather than trade with you." There will be lamentably and inevitably a fiercer tone between North and South. Everything which happens in one quarter will be distorted in the other. Each will lie about the other. The materials will exist more than before for civil commotion, and this will be aided by the powerful minority of Nationalists in the excluded counties working in conjunction with their

allies across the border. Nothing was ever gained in life by hatred ; nothing good ever came of it or could come of it ; and the first and most important of all the commandments of the spirit that there should be brotherhood between men will be deliberately broken to the ruin of the spiritual life of Ireland.

18. So far from Irish Nationalists wishing to oppress Ulster, I believe that there is hardly any demand which could be made, even involving democratic injustice to themselves, which would not willingly be granted if their Ulster compatriots would fling their lot in with the rest of Ireland and heal the eternal sore. I ask Ulster what is there that they could not do as efficiently in an Ireland with the status and economic power of a self-governing dominion as they do at present. Could they not build their ships and sell them, manufacture and export their linens ? What do they mean when they say Ulster industries would be taxed ? I cannot imagine any Irish taxation which their wildest dreams imagined so heavy as the taxation which they will endure as part of the United Kingdom in future. They will be implicated in all the revolutionary legislation made inevitable in Great Britain by the recoil on society of the munition workers and disbanded conscripts. Ireland, which luckily for itself, has the majority of its population economically independent as workers on the land, and which, in the development of agriculture now made necessary as a result of changes in naval warfare, will be able to absorb without much trouble its returning workers, Ireland will be much quieter, less revolutionary and less expensive to govern. I ask what reason is there to suppose that taxation in a self-governing Ireland would be greater than in Great Britain after the war, or in what way Ulster industries could be singled out, or for what evil purpose by an Irish Parliament ? It would be only too anxious rather to develop still further the one great industrial centre in Ireland ; and would, it is my firm conviction,

allow the representatives of Ulster practically to dictate the industrial policy of Ireland. Has there ever at any time been the slightest opposition by any Irish Nationalist to proposals made by Ulster industrialists which would lend colour to such a suspicion? Personally, I think that Ulster without safeguards of any kind might trust its fellow-countrymen; the weight, the intelligence, the vigour of character of Ulster people in any case would enable them to dominate Ireland economically.

19. But I do not for a moment say that Ulster is not justified in demanding safeguards. Its leader, speaking at Westminster during one of the debates on the Home Rule Bill, said scornfully, "We do not fear oppressive legislation. We know in fact there would be none. What we do fear is oppressive administration." That I translate to mean that Ulster fears that the policy of the spoils to the victors would be adopted, and that jobbery in Nationalist and Catholic interests would be rampant. There are as many honest Nationalists and Catholics who would object to this as there are Protestant Unionists, and they would readily accept as part of any settlement the proposal that all posts which can rightly be filled by competitive examination shall only be filled after examination by Irish Civil Service Commissioners, and that this should include all posts paid for out of public funds whether directly under the Irish Government or under County Councils, Urban Councils, Corporations, or Boards of Guardians. Further, they would allow the Ulster Counties through their members a veto on any important administrative position where the area of the official's operation was largely confined to North-East Ulster, if such posts were of a character which could not rightly be filled after examination and must needs be a government appointment. I have heard the suspicion expressed that Gaelic might be made a subject compulsory on all candidates, and that this would prejudice the chances of Ulster candidates desirous of entering the Civil Service.



Nationalist opinion would readily agree that, if marks were given for Gaelic, an alternative language, such as French or German, should be allowed the candidate as a matter of choice and the marks given be of equal value. By such concession jobbery would be made impossible. The corruption and bribery now prevalent in local government would be a thing of the past. Nationalists and Unionists alike would be assured of honest administration and that merit and efficiency, not membership of some sectarian or political association, would lead to public service.

20. If that would not be regarded as adequate protection Nationalists are ready to consider with friendly minds any other safeguards proposed either by Ulster or Southern Unionists, though in my opinion the less there are formal and legal acknowledgments of differences the better, for it is desirable that Protestant and Catholic, Unionist and Nationalist should meet and redivide along other lines than those of religion or past party politics, and it is obvious that the raising of artificial barriers might perpetuate the present lines of division. A real settlement is impossible without the inclusion of the whole province in the Irish State, and apart from the passionate sentiment existing in Nationalist Ireland for the unity of the whole country there are strong economic bonds between Ulster and the three provinces. Further, the exclusion of all or a large part of Ulster would make the excluded part too predominantly industrial and the rest of Ireland too exclusively agricultural, tending to prevent that right balance between rural and urban industry which all nations should aim at and which makes for a varied intellectual life, social and political wisdom and a healthy national being. Though for the sake of obliteration of past differences I would prefer as little building by legislation of fences isolating one section of the community from another, still I am certain that if Ulster, as the price of coming into a self-governing Ireland, demanded some application of the Swiss Cantonal system to itself which

would give it control over local administration it could have it; or, again, it could be conceded the powers of local control vested in the provincial governments in Canada, where the provincial assemblies have exclusive power to legislate for themselves in respect of local works, municipal institutions, licences, and administration of justice in the province. Further, subject to certain provisions protecting the interests of different religious bodies, the provincial assemblies have the exclusive power to make laws upon education. Would not this give Ulster all the guarantees for civil and religious liberty it requires? What arguments of theirs, what fears have they expressed which would not be met by such control over local administration? I would prefer that the mind of Ulster should argue its points with the whole of Ireland and press its ideals upon it without reservation of its wisdom for itself. But doubtless if Ulster accepted this proposal it would benefit the rest of Ireland by the model it would set of efficient administration: and it would, I have no doubt, insert in its Provincial constitution all the safeguards for minorities there which they would ask should be inserted in any Irish constitution to protect the interest of their co-religionists in that part of Ireland where they are in a minority.

21. I can deal only with fundamentals in this memorandum because it is upon fundamentals there are differences of thinking. Once these are settled it would be comparatively easy to devise the necessary clauses in an Irish constitution, giving safeguards to England for the due payment of the advances under the Land Acts, and the principles upon which an Irish contribution should be made to the empire for naval and military purposes. It was suggested by Mr. Lionel Curtis in his "Problems of the Commonwealth," that assessors might be appointed by the dominions to fix the fair taxable capacity of each for this purpose. It will be observed that while I have

claimed for Ireland the status of a dominion, I have referred solely hitherto to the powers of control over trade policy, customs, excise, taxation and legislation possessed by the dominions, and have not claimed for Ireland the right to have an army or a navy of its own. I recognize that the proximity of the two islands makes it desirable to consolidate the naval power under the control of the Admiralty. The regular army should remain in the same way under the War Office which would have the power of recruiting in Ireland. The Irish Parliament would, I have no doubt, be willing to raise at its own expense under an Irish Territorial Council a Territorial Force similar to that of England but not removable from Ireland. Military conscription could never be permitted except by Act of the Irish Parliament. It would be a denial of the first principle of nationality if the power of conscripting the citizens of the country lay not in the hands of the National Parliament but was exercised by another nation.

22. While a self-governing Ireland would contribute money to the defence of the federated empire, it would not be content that that money should be spent on dockyards, arsenals, camps, harbours, naval stations, ship-building and supplies in Great Britain to the almost complete neglect of Ireland as at present. A large contribution for such purposes spent outside Ireland would be an economic drain if not balanced by counter expenditure here. This might be effected by the training of a portion of the navy and army and the Irish regiments of the regular army in Ireland, and their equipment, clothing, supplies, munitions and rations being obtained through an Irish department. Naval dockyards should be constructed here and a proportion of ships built in them. Just as surely as there must be a balance between the imports and exports of a country, so must there be a balance between the revenue raised in a nation and the public expenditure

on that nation. Irish economic depression after the Act of Union was due in large measure to absentee landlordism and the expenditure of Irish revenue outside Ireland with no proportionate return. This must not be expected to continue against Irish interests. Ireland, granted the freedom it desires, would be willing to defend its freedom and the freedom of other dominions in the commonwealth of nations it belonged to, but it is not willing to allow millions to be raised in Ireland and spent outside Ireland. If three or five millions are raised in Ireland for imperial purposes and spent in Great Britain it simply means that the vast employment of labour necessitated takes place outside Ireland: whereas if spent here it would mean the employment of many thousands of men, the support of their families, and in the economic chain would follow the support of those who cater for them in food, clothing, housing, etc. Even with the best will in the world, to do its share towards its defence of the freedom it had attained, Ireland could not permit such an economic drain on its resources. No country could approve of a policy which in its application means the emigration of thousands of its people every year while it continued.

23. I believe even if there were no historical basis for Irish nationalism that such claims as I have stated would have become inevitable, because the tendency of humanity as it develops intellectually and spiritually is to desire more and more freedom, and to substitute more and more an internal law for the external law or government, and that the solidarity of empires or nations will depend not so much upon the close texture of their political organization or the uniformity of mind so engendered as upon the freedom allowed and the delight people feel in that freedom. The more educated a man is the more it is hateful to him to be constrained and the more impossible does it become for central governments to provide by regulation for the infinite variety of desires and cultural developments which

spring up everywhere and are in themselves laudable, and in no way endanger the state. A recognition of this has already led to much decentralization in Great Britain itself. And if the claim for more power in the administration of local affairs was so strongly felt in a homogeneous country like Great Britain that, through its county council system, people in districts like Kent or Essex have been permitted control over education and the purchase of land, and the distribution of it to small holders, how much more passionately must this desire for self-control be felt in Ireland where people have a different national character which has survived all the educational experiments to change them into the likeness of their neighbours. The battle which is going on in the world has been stated to be a spiritual conflict between those who desire greater freedom for the individual and think that the state exists to preserve that freedom, and those who believe in the predominance of the state and the complete subjection of the individual to it and the moulding of the individual mind in its image. This has been stated, and if the first view is a declaration of ideals sincerely held by Great Britain it would mean the granting to Ireland, a country which has expressed its wishes by vaster majorities than were ever polled in any other country for political changes, the satisfaction of its desires.

24. The acceptance of the proposals here made would mean sacrifices for the two extremes in Ireland, and neither party has as yet made any real sacrifice to meet the other, but have gone on their own way. I urge upon them that if the suggestions made here were accepted both would obtain substantially what they desire, the Ulster Unionists that safety for their interests and provision for Ireland's unity with the commonwealth of dominions inside the empire; the Nationalists that power they desire to create an Irish civilization by self-devised and self-checked efforts. The brotherhood of dominions of which

they would form one would be inspired as much by the fresh life and wide democratic outlook of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada, as by the hoarier political wisdom of Great Britain ; and military, naval, foreign and colonial policy must in the future be devised by the representatives of those dominions sitting in council together with the representatives of Great Britain. Does not that indicate a different form of imperialism from that they hold in no friendly memory ? It would not be imperialism in the ancient sense but a federal union of independent nations to protect national liberties, which might draw into its union other peoples hitherto unconnected with it, and so beget a league of nations to make a common international law prevail. The allegiance would be to common principles which mankind desire and would not permit the dominance of any one race. We have not only to be good Irishmen but good citizens of the world, and one is as important as the other, for earth is more and more forcing on its children a recognition of their fundamental unity, and that all rise and fall and suffer together, and that none can escape the infection from their common humanity. If these ideas emerge from the world conflict and are accepted as world morality it will be some compensation for the anguish of learning the lesson. We in Ireland like the rest of the world must rise above ourselves and our differences if we are to manifest the genius which is in us, and play a noble part in world history.

## NOTE

I was asked to put into shape for publication ideas and suggestions for an Irish settlement which had been discussed among a group whose members represented all extremes in Irish opinion. The compromise arrived at was embodied in documents written by members of the group privately circulated, criticized and again amended. I make special acknowledgments to Colonel Maurice Moore, Mr. James G. Douglas, Mr. Edward E. Lysaght, Mr. Joseph Johnston, F.T.C.D., Mr. Alec Wilson and Mr. Diarmid Coffey. For the tone, method of presentation and general arguments used, I alone am responsible. And if any are offended at what I have said, I am to be blamed, not my fellow-workers.

A.E.

## ADDENDUM

This pamphlet is a reprint of articles which appeared in the *Irish Times* on 26th, 28th and 29th May. The letters which follow appeared in the same paper on the 31st May.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES.

SIR—In an attempt to discover what measure of agreement to-day was possible between the political antagonists of yesterday, the attention of a few dozen Irish men and women was drawn to the articles by A.E. which have appeared in your columns, and the following statement was signed by those whose names are appended beneath it :—

“We, the undersigned, having read ‘Thoughts for a Convention’ by A.E. without endorsing all his statements, express our general agreement with his conclusions and with the argument by which these are reached.”

The signatories include :—

His Grace the Most Rev. Dr. Walsh, Archbishop of Dublin.	Edmund Curtis, M.A., Pro- fessor Oratory, History and English Literature, Dublin University.
The Lord Montague, K.P.	T. B. Rudmose Brown,
Sir John Griffith, M.A.I., M.Inst. C.E.	M.A., Professor of Ro- mance Languages, Uni- versity of Dublin.
Sir Nugent Everard.	Dermod O'Brien, Presi- dent Royal Hibernian Academy.
Sir Algernon Coote, Bt.	Thomas E. Gordon, M.B., F.R.C.S.I.
Sir J. R. O'Connell, LL.D.	Oliver Gogarty, F.R.C.S.I.
Sir Henry Grattan Bellew, Bt.	Joseph T. Wigham, M.D.
Lady Gregory.	Frank C. Purser, M.D.
Mrs. J. R. Green.	
Douglas Hyde, LL.D., D.Litt., Professor Irish National University.	



Robert J. Rowlette, M.D.  
Edward Martyn.  
George Gavan Duffy.  
F. J. O'Connor.  
John Mackie, F.C.A.  
John O'Neill.

John McCann  
J. Hubbard Clarke, J.P.  
Thomas Butler.  
John Douglas.  
E. A. Stopford.  
James MacNeill.

Does not this suggest that agreement might also be possible in an Irish Convention if, by some miracle, Irishmen of various parties would step out of their well-fenced enclosures to take counsel in common?—Yours, etc.,

JAMES G. DOUGLAS.

Dublin, May 30th, 1917.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE IRISH TIMES.

SIR—May I express the hope that 'A.E.'s' "Thoughts for a Convention," the last instalment of which you published yesterday, and which I am informed will reappear as a penny pamphlet this week, will be widely read? I am not thinking of his conclusions, ably reasoned as they are, but of the tone and temper in which he handles the most explosive material in the whole magazine of Irish controversy. It is refreshing to listen to one who not only has the courage of his convictions, but can also say honestly that the convictions are his own and not somebody else's.

'A.E.' strikes a note which may go far to make the Convention the success the vast majority of Irishmen hardly dare to hope that it will be. If he speaks only for himself, "More shame for his generation" will surely be the verdict of history.—Yours, etc.,

HORACE PLUNKETT.

The Plunkett House, Dublin,  
May 30th, 1917.

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